

Yaphank Bennie, Back in Rest Billets, Tells More of Front Line Experience



Yaphank Bennie and his pals marching from the front lines to rest billets.

By FRAZIER HUNT,

Author of "Blown In by the Draft."

SOMEWHERE IN FRANSE

Monday

FRIEND BARNEY: Well old pal our battalun is out of the front line and back here in some nice rest billets in support to them green birds they got up there in the front line now. And I guess maybe they dont need support or nothing like that. If them Dutchmen ever come over now like they done to us I bet there would be some Marathong race—that wouldnt end until them hunns hit our lines of support here and then they will have to lap back with us riding there tales, as they say in the avashun.

I aint got much confidence in these green troops that aint never been in the line at all. Our battalun has been in two weeks and of course we are wise to all the tricks them yello hunns got but this battalun they got in there now never even seen Nomans Land before and they wouldn't know it from a couple acres of wheat. But I guess if anything happens to them the old Fightin Second Battalun will come to there support so that all the milluns of boys who volunteered for the draft wont be disgraced or nothing.

Getting releaved up in the front line is a kind of a funny job, Barney. The new birds come marching in down the trench single file and they are just about scared to death, and they put the two of them that are going to take your post up on the firing step along side of you.

"Is that there Nomans Land?" they whisper to you looking out into the dark all scared and everything.

"Sure," you say back. "See that line of wire out there about 30 yards? Well that's our wire but right behind that the Germuns is lying and they are libe to come over any time."

Well I had one of the boys who was taking my place awful scared and I guess he was so scared he got cold because pretty soon he stepped down and went and got his blanket and then he come back and wrapped his feet and legs all around in this blanket until he looked like one of them Eytalian mummies standing up there in the trench looking out into Nomans Land.

I didn't say nothing but in about twenty minutes the Lutenant come along on an inspectun trip and when he seen this solder all tied up there in his blanket he certainly did hand him the ancient razz.

"Didn't they bring you out your chair yet?" he said right low.

"No sir, they aint brung me nothing yet, sir," this bird answered back.

"What, didn't they bring you a foot stule or nothing?"

"No sir, I just come and I guess they dont know Im here yet."

Well when the Lute seen that his stuff was shooting over this birds head and missing him all the way around he repeated it again and this time he winged him and it sunk in.

"Cant you see that if the Germuns would attack here real sudden that you would be helpless all wrapped up in that blanket," the Lute said. "You would be zilled before you could get your feet out of it, fool. Didn't you realize you was right up here in the front line trenches

and the Germuns was right across there three or four hundred yards?"

"No sir, I thought we was way back in support," this fool said.

And right there Barney I just about fell offn the Christmas tree and broke a leg. And the Lute he was so mad he bit a piece out of his tin hat and then eat three hand grenades.

There certainly is a lot of high grade bone and wonderful ivory in this here army, Barney.

Yours for a Germin plage. BENNIE.

Gertie Should Ought to Write.

FRANSE

Tuesday

DEAR GERTIE: Well I guess you must be having a paper famen or else old U. Sam has quit making stamps or they run out of ink or something because I aint had no letter from you since the last Germin drive started. Of course I know how busy all the girls back home must be entertaining the boys who are winning the war guarding bridges and wearing out the west part of there pants on hard chairs that aint got no upholstery on em. Every time I think of them brave solders fighting them terrible battles against George Rye and John Barleycorns it just makes me weck. And this Geniril Debochery and his chief of staff, Col. R. E. Morse, is some fighters but I got every confidence in some of our soldiers back home.

Of course us boys over here is all going to get killed anyway so it aint no use getting excited about any of us and a real wise dame certainly would spend no time bothering about some sucker who didnt have no more sense than go and enlist and come over to Franse just to make it sure that them abused Germuns wouldnt come over to America and do to us what they done to Belgium.

I dont suppose any of this stuff is interesting to you especially after you have heard all them brave New Jersey and Long Island salers and solders telling how they been fighting all them Germin subs on the coast and all about the battles they had in them Broadway trenches. But you might get a luff about how we are getting killed over here up in the trenches that are all filled right up to the top with dead and dying and terrible sites just like there was a had street car accident or something like that.

I guess we only got a few left in our company alone and we been weeks fighting against them Germuns and we have killed thousands and thousands of them. I guess I have killed all by myself a couple of hundred and I could have killed more but I got tired out throwing hand grenades at them and then when I started shooting with my rifle I shot and shot until my shoulder was knocked out of place and I was black and blue from the recoil clean from my neck down to my waste line.

There is a whole lot more I could tell about how us brave boys have been fighting over here and how we have lade down our lifes for our girls back home, but I dont want to spoil your day for you. Probably you will never get another letter from me because we got to go up in the line again in a couple of days and I dont suppose any of us will ever come out of it. But, Gertie, if maybe once in awhile you would just shed a tear for me

and then I would be able to say O death where is thy victory, O grave where is your sting. Farewell. BENNIE.

Trenches a Fine Safe Place.

SOMEWHERE IN FRANSE

Wednesday

DEAR MAMA: Well Mama we are back out of the trenches in a nice quiet rest billet way back in support where we dont have nothing to do but just lay around and rest and sing and eat and sleep and have a fine time. We stay here ten more days and then we move up to another billet and spend ten more days in reserve and then we move up to the trenches for ten days more.

If you could only see what a lot of fun a fello has in the trenches Mama and how safe it is you would not worry at all about me. I wish somebody would write the truth about war and stop making solders heroes and just show what little chance they got of getting killed or even wounded. You see nobody wants to give the game away Mama and everybody wants to be a hero so they all write a lot of letters to there girls and people like that and tell them about what they done and how many Germuns they just killed and a lot of lies like that and then everybody back home thinks that when you say Somewhere in Franse you are reading the inscription on a tomb stone.

We was up in the trenches ten days Mama and all that we had happen was one boy wounded and he done that himself fooling with his own rifle. I guess the Germuns must of shot over about a million dollars worth of ammunition and they didn't hit none of us in the front trenches. All they got was some solders halting up some supplies at night and then I guess maybe a couple of solders working the big guns. The front line trenches is almost safer than anywhere else is Mama and yet if you read what a lot of fellos write home you would think they didnt have no more chance of coming out alive than they do of living forever.

So dont you go worrying Mama and just remember that your little old Bennie is coming home one of these days and he is going to have so many medals on his chest that you will think he is a Civil war veteran just coming back from a convention.

Love to all and tell Sis that I got the pictur of her and the little kid and that for her to send some more. Picturs is mighty nice over here Mama.

Your own SOLDER BOY BENNIE.

"Dangeris Missun" for Bennie.

FRANSE

Thursday

BARNEY: Well old pal what do you suppose I have been chose for now, and maybe when I tell you it will not give you a thrill or nothing like that.

Well I have been chose to go on a special dangeris missun with a small party of picked men—and what we gotta do is to go right out in Nomans Land at night and mend our wire that has been all cut up and knocked down by some Germin shells. I guess this is about the most dangeris missun that any solders ever get chose for over here and if a fello comes out of it alive he is pretty sure to get a

Crow dey Ger and maybe some American medals for bravery and etc.

Anyway Barney a fello certainly takes his life in his hands when he goes out there in Nomans Land and all them yello hunns have to do is to get a bead on us with their automatick rifles and then open up with their artillery at the same time and they mow us down like we was flies. But we gotta do it because if you dont have good wire in front of your trenches the Germuns is libe to come over some night and rade your trenches and carry off some prisoners and when they get them they make them tell all about just how many divisions we got over here and all kind of secrets that us solders know, and if we dont tell them they cut off our ears first and then if we dont tell them they cut off a finger at a time and then they keep working on down until a fello has to tell or he wouldnt have no legs or arms or nothing left. Thats the kind of people Germuns is.

Well we start out after it gets dark to night and I guess we are going to work all night and then we will bring our dead and wounded and our tools back on in with us as soon as it gets light. There is about twenty of us going and we was all carefully picked by our Captain.

"Im just going to see what you men are good for," our Captain said when he had picked us out. "Maybe it will be mending wires because I guess I tried about everything else on you. Now lets see you make good for the honor of old F Company."

So you can see Barney that with our Captain thinking that much of us we certainly aint going to throw him down.

Well bone swor, BENNIE.

Bennie Locates the Hun.

FRANSE

Friday

BARNEY: Well I would like to see anybody get me out on any more wire mending patrols. If they ever try to pull any of that ruff stuff on me again I will just tell them to go ahead and shoot me and not prolong the agony by letting the Germuns shoot at me all night and make me live a thousand deaths.

We went out there all right last night, crawling over the top as soon as it got a little dark and going up to our wire and starting stringing some new wire we brung along with us and fixing the old stakes up and etc. It looked like it was going to be a cinch job and I was just beginning to think how easy it was when all of a sudden some of these flares was shot off that makes everything light as day.

"Stand still and dont move!" some body hollered, but if he thought he was speaking to me he had it all wrong because I guess I was not going to stand up there and be shot dead like a rat. I made a dive for a shell hole and just as I got in there they opened up with some machine guns and you should have seen the rest of them birds drop to old Mother earth.

Well they fired a belt or two at us and then it died down and we all crawled up and went to work again but it wasnt more than about ten minutes that another one of them flares went up and I dived for

(Continued on Following Page.)